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TAGS: [ELTN](#) [EMIN](#) [ETRD](#) [AO](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: MOCAMEDES RR STALLED FOR DEMINING

REF: A. LUANDA 1015
[1](#)B. LUANDA 648

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. Work on Angola's southernmost railway line, the Mocamedes Railway (CFM), is not progressing, according to its Director, Julio Bango Joaquim. Bango said work will begin as soon as landmines are removed from the line east of Lubango. He added the railway should prosper when the iron mines along the route resume the export of ore, halted since [1](#)1973. End Summary.

Meeting with CFM Director

[1](#)2. (U) On October 9, Econoff and analyst met with Dr. Julio Bango, Director General of the Mocamedes Railway Company (CFM) at the CFM's headquarters in Lubango, Huila Province. According to Bango, CFM has kept the westernmost one-third of the 970 kilometer-long rail line just barely operational between Lubango and the port of Namibe (Note: The trip takes seven hours by rail but only two by automobile). According to Bango, the National Reconstruction Office (GRN), through its Chinese subcontractors, is in charge of rehabilitation work along the line, and CFM managers merely inspect the completed work.

[1](#)3. (U) Bango said that rebuilding the line should take two years and start in five more months, after the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) demine the easternmost 400 kilometers of line up to the terminus in Menongue, Cuando Cubango Province. The demining timeline is based on the FAA clearing mines at three kilometers per day. Because the old rails and ties are both made of steel, FAA deminers will make a second search for mines after the old steel structures have been removed.

[1](#)4. (U) Bango said the Chinese construction company contracted by the GRN to rebuild the line has set up two camps along the line: at Arimba to cast concrete ties and at Chanja to quarry ballast for the line. Once the line has been demined, the old ballast will be removed, the rail bed graded anew, new concrete culverts built, fresh ballast put down and eventually, track will be laid, Bango said.

Hauling Iron Ore

[1](#)5. (U) Portuguese investors built the Mocamedes Railway line in the early 20th century to export iron ore from Huila's Kassinga mine, according to Bango and Fernando Pontes Ferreira, Huila Province Director of Planning and Statistics. The mines operated from 1957 to 1973, producing 6 million metric tons of ore in 1973. A Luanda-based expatriate businessman confided that the Brazilian mining giant, Rio do

Vale Doce, has studied the potential of restarting the Kassinga mine, but apparently is waiting for the rail line to open before investing.

Comment

¶6. (U) While some initial preparations have been made to support the rehabilitation of the CFM railway, most of the effort remains in suspense until demining is complete along the entire line. The ever-present danger of land mines in rural Angola is a good example of the barriers to service roll-out facing the country. The hard-to-answer question about why work has not yet progressed along the mine-free section of the rail line reveals another.

FERNANDEZ